April 21, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

The IDEA (Innovation and Design Experience for All) Program at Bryant University is a highly innovative course required of all Bryant students in their first year as part of Bryant University's First-Year Gateway curriculum. While Design Thinking is applied in multiple areas with business leaders, it is unique that an entire freshmen class would partake in a program as part of their curriculum. However, the expected outcomes align with Bryant's mission of developing leaders of character and is consistent with the Bryant Way of innovation and applied learning. We fully expect that one of the long-term outcomes of this program will be fresh approaches to global sustainability efforts.

IDEA was developed to enhance specific skills needed in tomorrow's leaders including creative problem solving, critical thinking, and effective team work. The three-day course teaches design thinking, leadership, and teamwork skills in a novel fashion – assigning a real organizational current problem and requiring student teams to develop and present a prototype solution in 72 hours. The program is led by faculty specially trained and certified in design thinking and in Myers Briggs analysis. Students are first introduced to the concept of design thinking, which is a systematic approach to developing creative solutions to problems. They are put into cohorts of 25, each consisting of 5 teams of 5 students, and then learn how to work effectively as a team using their Myers-Briggs personality profiles. The second day of the program students go through the three stages of design thinking: field observation, brainstorming, and prototyping. This entails bussing approximately 900 students to 36 different locations for field observations, then providing dynamic ideation spaces for intensive brainstorming. Finally students must develop a prototype solution (no posterboards or Powerpoints allowed!) for which they receive feedback from a panel of mentors. After multiple iterations and improvements to the prototype based upon that feedback, all
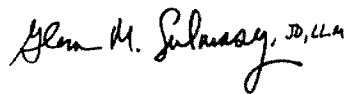
student teams pitch their solution in a competition fair. A multiplicity of creative activities accompany these tasks to keep the students' creative energies flowing.

In the three years the program has been implemented in its current form, we have informally recognized some of our desired outcomes. Faculty have observed changes in students who have participated in IDEA. Teams in later classes tend to have fewer issues, and students are better prepared to more effectively approach problem solving. The course has been so successful at the undergraduate level that we are implementing it at the executive education level as well.

Sincerely,

Glenn Sulmasy
Provost & Chief Academic Officer